CSA News

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CSA Week 15
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Log in to your CSA account online to find a customized list, photos and descriptions for your share.

Farm Share Storage & Use Tips:

- Carrots and radishes: Remove tops. Store each separately in plastic bags in the fridge.
- Eggplant, peppers, zucchini and summer squash, beets, hakurei turnips: Store unwashed in a perforated plastic bag in your fridge's vegetable bin.
- Leafy greens and cabbage: Store in your fridge in perforated plastic bags.
- Onions: Cippolini are specialty Italian onions. Candy are sweet yellow. Also find red, yellow and white. Onions are cured, so store on the countertop or pantry, away from sunlight.
- Potatoes: These are new potatoes, dug fresh and meant to be refrigerated.
- Spaghetti Squash: Store at room temperature, never in the fridge. Roast these and pull apart flesh with a fork.
- Tomatoes: Get your canning tomatoes this week! Store tomatoes at room temperature, not in the fridge. Ripen in a paper bag. You may receive tomatoes at varying degrees of ripeness so you can enjoy them throughout the week.

The Soil That Feeds You

It may sound like an oxymoron, but the more active a soil is, the stronger the foundation it becomes. Organic matter brings life to the rock dust. Together, the minerals and microbes cohabitate with a communal goal: to manage water in the soil. We talked about irrigation back in CSA Week 12, and water in the soil is top of mind this time of year.

Too-wet plant roots can't breathe, while too-dry plant leaves wither. In symbiotic fashion, the microscopic microbes that live in the soil become little hoteliers, dam constructors and tunnel dwellers to manage the moisture content of their environment. Plant roots plug the energy from the sun into the equation, and suddenly organic matter strengthens our foundation.

Us farmers have lots of books about soils. One of those charts in a soils book gives each type of soil a water-holding-capacity rating. Sufficient amounts of organic matter living within the soil's mineral superstructure yield a favorable rating. This organic material in its purest form is humus—note that it's not *hummus*—living, breathing particles that are just the right size to snuggle up with the soil's sand, silt and clay structure.

Old roots, dead bugs, fallen leaves, earthworm poop or tilled-in plant material are decomposed down to their core material by all manner of microscopic miners to create humus. This humus is hydrophilic—a sponge to absorb moisture to ensure a steady supply for the soil food web. Other sets of micro-flora and -fauna of the soil food web use humus like mortar to build intricate little structures from soil particles, creating tiny cavities that, in turn, hold water without letting it drain away. Plant roots have access to this moisture in times of dry conditions, thus buffering the effects of drought. Working the soil in a way that favors the accumulation of organic matter is the reason it is called *organic* farming in the first place.

Living plants are the architects of the whole soil-building project. Their elongating roots cleave through the soil in search of water and nutrients to send to the photosynthesis production team. The photo-synthesizers convert some of these nutrients into the food we eat while at the same time using some solar energy to send different nutrients down to the roots. The plant roots also exude nutrient-rich solutions into the soil around them, feeding the

microbes that, in turn, feed the roots the compounds needed for growth. A most notable symbiosis exists between the plant root and the filamentous mycorrhizal fungi. The root provides nourishment to the attached fungi, which, in turn, mineralizes the sand, silt and clay particles, converting the locked-up nutrients into a form that can be used in photosynthesis.

Soil water that is hanging out in all the soil nooks and crannies—ant and earthworm tunnels and voids left from dead roots—gets sucked into the plant as part of transpiration. It is akin to the chimney effect for plants. Transpiration is a term for the combined forces of translocation of water from roots to shoots and the respiration of the leaves during photosynthesis. As the leaves breathe in carbon dioxide and respire oxygen, they pull water into the transaction from the roots. The more vigorous the growth, the more water is needed. The hotter and drier the air, the more water is needed. The water from the roots keeps the leaves cool as they convert solar energy into carbonaceous material for use by the roots to build soil. By incorporating plant material into our soil to capture the organic matter, we are encouraging this evolutionary process.

One of the few things we all remember from first grade science is seeing all those creatures in a drop of rainwater under a microscope—an unimaginable number of "bugs" swimming or floating in and around and amongst each other, seeming to coexist. Look at a drop of soil water, and the complexities of coexistence go up several orders of magnitude. Our cover cropping systems, hay production and rotational livestock grazing are adding organic matter to the soil. Our organic, regenerative farming philosophy gives life in the soil every opportunity to thrive. We are constantly shoring up the foundation of our solar-powered food-production system while judiciously extracting nutrients for ourselves, but never more than Mother Earth would appreciate. —*Mac Stone*

Time for Tomato Purchases!

Whether you are canning, freezing, jamming, saucing or otherwise making great tomato creations, this is the time to add them to your share! From your CSA account online, you have the option to add on 10 pounds of San Marzano (#1 quality), 10 pounds of #2 red tomatoes, and 10 pounds of #2 mixed-color tomatoes, which includes heirlooms.

Recipes

Marinara Sauce
Adapted from Grandbaby Cakes

2 T. olive oil
1/2 c. diced yellow onion
2 whole garlic cloves
1 T. chopped fresh oregano
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper
2 lb. San Marzano tomatoes
1 bay leaf
1 tsp. granulated sugar

In a small saucepan, heat olive oil over medium. Add onions, and cook for 5-8 minutes, until translucent and tender. Add garlic, oregano, salt, black pepper and red pepper. Cook for 2-3 minutes. Add tomatoes, bay leaf and sugar. Stir until fully combined.

Bring sauce to a low boil, then lower heat to medium-low, cover, and cook for 25-30 minutes. Stir occasionally.

Allow sauce to cool for about 10 minutes, and remove the bay leaf.

Add sauce to a blender or food processor, blend until smooth, and pour into a heat-safe bowl. Enjoy in your favorite marinara-based dish.

Potatoes with Caramelized Onions
Adapted from Simply Recipes

olive oil
1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
1/2 T. unsalted butter
salt and pepper, to taste
6 slices bacon, sliced
1 lb. new potatoes, sliced in small wedges
1 pinch red pepper flakes
1 T. chopped capers
1 T. chopped fresh thyme

In a small sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil over low heat. Add onions in an even layer. After 5 minutes, add butter, stir, and add a pinch of salt. Stir every few minutes. Remove from heat when evenly browned, in about 30 minutes.
Heat a larger sauté pan on medium, and add bacon. Sauté until slightly crispy, and remove from the pan onto a paper towel-lined plate.

Add potatoes in a single layer to pan with bacon drippings. Do not crowd the pan. Add a pinch of red pepper flakes and salt. Don't move the pan; let potatoes brown. After 3-5 minutes, flip potatoes and brown the other side. Turn heat to medium-low. Add capers, onions and bacon. Rewarm over low heat, then add thyme.